
実践論文

‘Considerations’ of Learners, Learning, and Language Skills in a Content-based Intercultural Communication Training Course

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As a subject taught in relation to language departments, intercultural communication (ICC) is a relative latecomer in Japan. It is an essential one, however, for a deeper and well-rounded understanding of communication. This paper will describe an introductory course in ICC, starting with an overview of options and a description of the target learners. Course content will be outlined with reference to three further approaches and considerations: experiential learning, active learning and the four basic language skills.

Key Words: active learning, content-based, experiential education, four language skills, intercultural communication

コンテンツベースの異文化間コミュニケーション研修講座における
学習者、学習、言語スキルの「考察」

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言語系学科における異文化間コミュニケーションの教授は、日本では比較的新しいことである。しかし、それはコミュニケーションのより深く十分な理解のために不可欠なことといえる。本稿では、異文化間コミュニケーションの入門講座コースについて説明する。最初に教授の際の選択肢の概要と、対象の学習者を説明する。コースの内容は、体験学習、アクティブ・ラーニング、および基本的な言語四技能という3つのアプローチ及び考慮事項を参照しながら概説する。

1. Introduction

Teaching ‘culture’ and intercultural communication in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context can often be mistakenly be seen as a matter of introducing culture-specific scenarios and lists of ‘dos and don’ts’. While this approach may be of interest and can have its place in preparation for intercultural interactions or time abroad, it does not prepare learners to deal with cultures in general, nor does it challenge learners to examine and reflect on their own culture and their own cultural values and perceptions. Teaching ‘culture’ should consist of

topics that are universally applicable rather than introducing ‘snapshots’ of habits, customs and, possibly, stereotyped behaviours. It should aim to raise awareness, be interesting and be accessible to EFL learners. It can also harness and promote other skill areas related to EFL. Having students ‘experience’ other cultures or cultural differences firsthand can go some way to achieving these aims and can better prepare them for future intercultural encounters. This is problematic, however, in a very homogeneous society such as Japan.

This paper will focus on one course offered by the author at Seisen University, ‘Understanding and Being More Effective in Intercultural Communication’. It will firstly give an overview of options for intercultural training. It will then give attention to the target learners. These initial issues are relevant to both the course content and teaching approaches. The course content will be described and aligned with the three further ingredients in the course: experiential learning, active learning and the four basic language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

2. Intercultural Training

There are many reasons why learners should receive intercultural training. As the study of intercultural communication moved out from under the wings of linguistics and anthropology in the 1950s, Politzer (1959) pointed out that, “If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning” (quoted in Cosgrove, p. 1). Bennett (1997) more bluntly states that it is a fluent fool who “speaks a foreign language well but doesn’t understand the social or philosophical content of that language” (p. 16). Intercultural communication training should, of course, expand how they perceive the world, and one not just filled with differences we can experience through of five senses, but one of differing attitudes, opinions, beliefs and values. In a broad sense intercultural training can influence learners in three ways: cognitively, affectively and behaviourally (Shibata, 1998; Brislin, Landis & Brandt, 1983). Kohls (1996) breaks down the impact of intercultural training to:

- preparation for an actual move to a new culture
- understanding of survival and logistic skills
- abilities to communicate verbally and non-verbally
- fewer social faux pas
- better awareness
- empathy
- ability to cope with culture shock
- positiveness in the face of adjustment
- bi-culturation

● self- and cultural understanding

These are but some. The ways to achieve effective intercultural training and instruction are as varied as the possible desired outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1: Potential Approaches & Models for Intercultural Training

| Gudykunst, Hammer & Wiseman (1977) | Triandis (1977) | Brislin (1979) | Bennett (1986) |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Intellectual approach | Cognitive training | Cognitive training | Intellectual model |
| Self-awareness approach | Self-insight training | Self-awareness training | Self-awareness model |
| Area simulation approach | Specific training | Attribution training | Area training model |
| Behavioural approach | Behavioural training | Behaviour modification training | |
| Cultural awareness approach | General training | Experiential training | Cultural awareness model |

Chen and Starosta (2005) also note similarities among proposed models and synthesize these into six categories:

1. The Classroom Model (Chen & Starosta, 2005 p. 263), or 'university' or 'intellectual' model, presents learners with various information about a specific targeted culture in a traditional education context. Being information-based it is relative easy to apply but its drawback is it largely present the 'what to learn' and not the means to learn.
2. The Simulation Model (ibid. p. 264-265) attempts to involve learners in near-real environment whereby they can experience and apply problem-solving skills. Drawbacks are that it is difficult to create simulation contexts.
3. The Self-Awareness Model (ibid. p. 265) is based on the premise that knowing yourself would help you understand others. While self-awareness is very important, as a basis for intercultural training, this is criticized for its limited and potentially ethno-centric conceptual framework.
4. The Cultural-Awareness Model (ibid. p. 265-266) focuses on understanding how culture influences people. Popular, it is a general, cognitive approach based on a theoretic approach and there lies a weakness in that it may be harder to apply to specific cultures.
5. The Behavioural Model (ibid. 266-267) is very much a 'horses-for-courses' or 'when in Rome...' approach whereby learners are taught specific behaviours for a specific cultural context. Weaknesses are questionable accuracy and reality.
6. The Interaction Model (ibid. 267) requires direct interaction with members of a specific culture and that through such informants and the experience learners can develop an understanding of the culture. This would suffer from similar disadvantages to the Behavioural Model.

All the approaches and models described above have strengths and weakness. While possible, it would be a rare training course that focuses only on one. Commonsense would suggest that a course take the best that each approach has to offer considering how that fits the intercultural training context and the learners. The course described here tries to take an

eclectic, 'integrated' approach. While by necessity it leans heavily toward a 'classroom'/cognitive approach in order to provide basic content, where possible it asks, encourages and requires learners to be both culturally- and self-aware. It also provides some occasions (simulated) to challenge learners' perceptions. Behaviourial aspects are touched on through the author's own intercultural experiences and learners are urged to contribute their own. Finally, learners are asked to 'interact' through whatever vignettes of culture that the course brings to the classroom but especially as objective observers of their own culture.

The following sections will describe considerations taken to fulfill the course aims: Learners, Course Content and Approaches. The latter consideration takes an integrated approach to intercultural training as a 'given' and focuses on Experiential Issues, Active Learning and Four Language Skills.

3. Learners

With regards to the learners, some expectations were made based on my own experience of teaching English in Japan for over thirty years and in teaching intercultural communication for much of that period.

1. The course presumes that learners are starting at a near zero baseline in terms of the intercultural understanding and knowledge-base. It presumes that they hold a very stereotypical and narrow view of culture and that they have not necessarily had, or are aware of having had, 'intercultural' (see 3 below) experiences.
2. The course is 'a-cultural' in that it does not focus on or examine any one particular culture. That said, learners are always urged to consider their own culture (predominantly Japan) and their own intercultural experiences. Also, as the instructor, I will offer my own intercultural experiences of my 'base' culture (Australian), 'adopted' culture (Japanese) and add references to any other culture if it is relevant. This is as much to add 'colour' and first-hand experience as it is to encourage the learners to reflect on their own experiences, especially ones that may be of the *faux pas* kind.
3. It emphasizes that 'intercultural' does not necessarily mean 'international' as in cultures other than Japan. The experiences of a learner from Tottori who has moved to Tokyo are just as valid as 'intercultural' as those of a learner from Hiroshima who has lived in Hanoi, for example.
4. The course recognizes learners' intercultural experiences *outside* of Japan and with *non-Japanese within* Japan may be limited, particularly in duration. In the case of the experiences outside of Japan they can be roughly categorized as follows:
 - never travelled outside of Japan (some)
 - travel abroad on short vacations (numerous)

- short-term study abroad experience (some)
- year-long study abroad sojourns (minority)
- lived abroad (uncommon and usually at a fairly young age)

In most cases the locations are in English-speaking regions or countries, or in north or south-east Asia.

The latter case of contact with *non-Japanese within* Japan is even more infrequent and time-limited, such as having:

- a non-Japanese teacher, for example Assistant English Teacher (AET) at junior or senior high school, or at an *eikaiwa* language school
- a non-Japanese classmate at junior or senior high school
- hosted a non-Japanese national on a homestay
- contact with non-Japanese through a part-time job

In all these cases the context denotes roles that would further limit interaction. Also, in many cases the non-Japanese would be a native English-speaker.

Considering the above and put in a 'nutshell', the course anticipates there is little or no intercultural awareness in the academic or practical sense. A further and related aspect of 'learner' knowledge is that learners are not particularly aware of world geography in a number of aspects:

- physical geography (continents, regions and countries)
- geo-political geography
- religious geography

While the course does not address these deficiencies directly, it is a consideration and may be one to include in the future.

4. Course Content

On the side of pedagogy and delivery of content, the course also has some base conditions and considerations:

- breadth is better than depth (lay of the land over geological analysis)
- visual is better than textual (PPT and pictures over words and writing)
- doing is better than not doing (note-taking, drawing over reading)
- evoking is better than waiting

Finally, the course has expectations related to the active role learners must play in class and with assignments.

The course covers two 15-week semesters. First semester is devoted to building an understanding of the parameters and features of the concept of culture and it also focuses on how one needs to have a heightened degree of awareness and sensitivity for success in an

intercultural context. Second semester provides more opportunities to build an awareness of culture but is focused on more analytical-practical topics. The course culminates in a common analysis assignment whereby students can choose one (or more) of many approaches or instruments. The following section will give thumbnail description of each module.

5. Orientation (Class One)

Above I have described my considerations and expectations of incoming students. The first class addresses some of these issues immediately but briefly as ‘food for thought’ for the students. We first consider the parameters of the course title, Understanding and Being More Effective in Intercultural Communication: what is meant by ‘inter’, ‘cultural’ and ‘communication’.

5.1 Mission Statement

To establish an overriding aim-cum-attitude for the course a ‘Mission Statement’ is described and embellished:

The aim of this lecture series is to better understand:

- *the true nature of culture,*
- *how it affects us*
- *how to become more sensitive toward other cultures.*

Key words are:

- *AWARENESS*
- *SENSITIVITY*
- *OBJECTIVITY*

We will not be studying any particular culture. We will be learning about aspects of culture that can be applied anywhere, anytime.

In view of the fact that this is the first class a very simple overview of topics is given. Most of these will be further developed into 2-week topic blocks that is a feature of the course. They are described as:

- What is ‘culture’
- How culture ‘works’
- Cultural sensitivity
- Cultural dichotomies
- Non-verbal communication
- Culture shock
- Ways to observe communication

The above deals more with cognitive and informational aspects of the course. Students are

also informed of the approach to the class and their active role in classes.

5.2 In-class

In class, content will be delivered through lectures based on PowerPoint. Students are expected to take notes to the best of their abilities (the PowerPoint slides are made available after the lecture in a photocopy-and-return file for those who want to check their notes or who were absent from the lecture). To this end, students are required to keep an organized A-4 sized notebook for notes and handouts (Figure 1).

At times students participate in group work discussion that may focus on the pre-lecture status of awareness (e.g. "What is non-verbal communication?") or problem-solving or

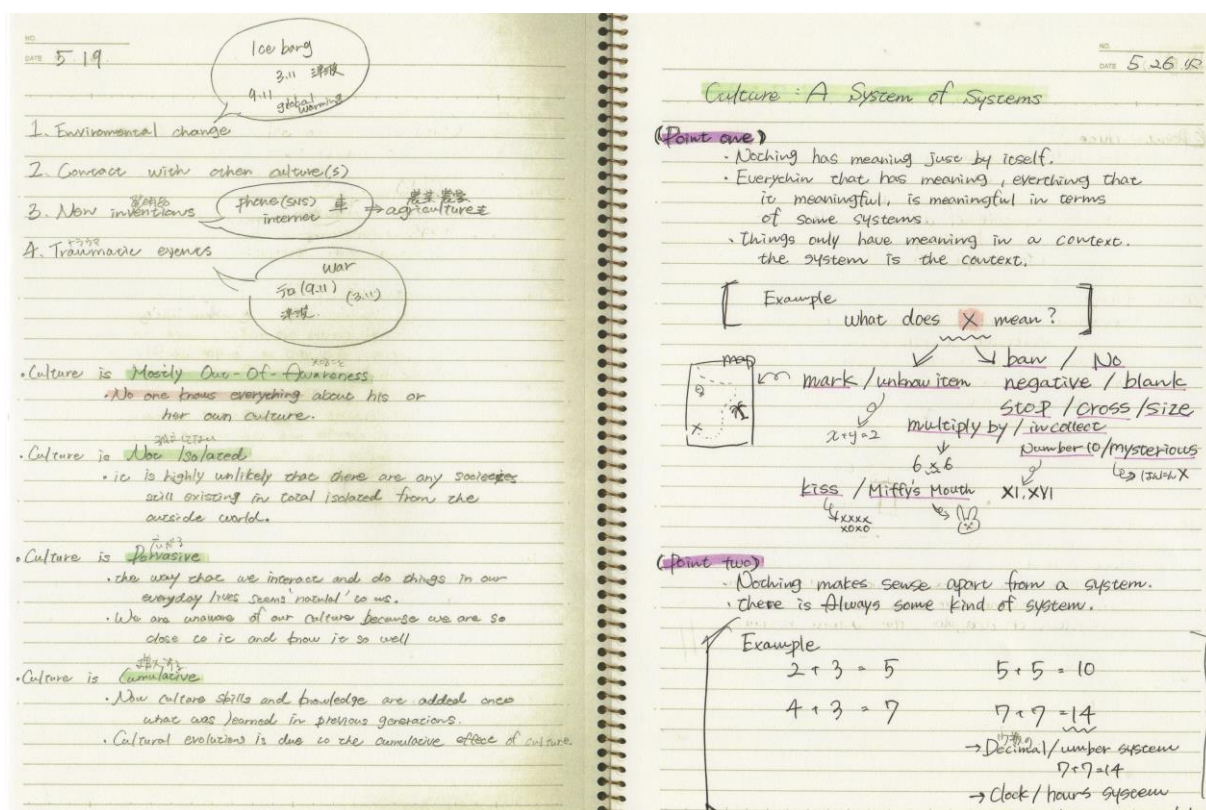


Figure 1: Sample pages of a student notebook

opinion-generating activities. It will be explain that many of the in-class and out-of-class activities will be experiential activities and that active participation is a must.

5.3 Out-of-class activities

Out-of-class activities may require some short reading, but it has direct relation to what

will be covered in the following week's class. Topic-related homework activities will also be based on what has been covered in one class and will be shared with other students in the next before being formally submitted. These assignments may require some writing, but it may not necessary be report-style or even prose. In all cases it is emphasized that student are expected to apply what they have learned in class in their daily lives.

5.4 Assessment

Assessment is explained as based on a balance of the following:

- Attendance and participation (20%). Considering that there is no textbook and that all content and activities are set up in the class, this is a key component. It does recognize, however, that job-hunting and teaching practice rounds will impact on some students.
- End-of-1st Semester Multiple Choice Test (20%). This 'test' is for the most part an open-book test-cum-summary of the main components of the course. It focuses solely on the information delivered through the lectures (e.g. the terms and technicalities of different types of non-verbal communication)
- Assignments (30%). Several assignments are required. These usually require students to give their personal view or interpretation of a topic that has been covered in the lecture (e.g. their analysis of a photograph based on the different types of non-verbal communication)
- End-of-Year Analysis Assignment 20%. A common video source is used for an analysis-based report, but students have several options for how to analyze it (e.g. analysis of non-verbal communication). They may work individually (the report must be individual) but they are encouraged to work together.
- Notebook 10%. The notebook is also evidence of participation.

6. Specific Course Content

The course is divided into four sections, two in each semester (Table 2). Section one could be described as 'Defining 'culture'' and introduces several ways, visual and textual, in which the concept can be considered and explained. Each topic is covered in one week with a brief follow up in the next. Section two deals with intercultural sensitivity, in other words, how one might or should react in an intercultural context. Section three is an eclectic mix of some standard intercultural topics usually each covered in two- to three-week blocks, and in section four there is a focus on analysis, drawing on the previous sections. The course culminates in an analysis project using a common source (Appendix 2).

Table 2: Semester Two content topics on key ICC issues & analysis

| Semester One Topics | Thumbnail Description of Content |
|---|---|
| Analogies of culture | Two visual analogies, the ‘iceberg’ and the ‘tree’ are used to introduce the key understanding that ‘culture’ has a ‘visible’ and an elaborate, extensive and important ‘invisible’ side. |
| Definitions of culture | The key components of a verbal description (i.e. definition) of ‘culture’ are isolated by examining and analyzing numerous definitions, both academic and analogical. |
| Models of culture | Several famous models of ‘culture’ as examined to further emphasize the considerations raised so far. |
| Characteristics of culture | Several key characters of ‘culture’ (e.g. it is ‘dynamic’, it is ‘pervasive’) are raised and examples given. |
| Culture as a system of systems | The systematic nature of culture and potential pitfalls are raised. This bridging topic is based on Condon (described in Bayne, 2010). |
| Stumbling blocks of ICC | Barna’s seminal work (1998) raising six areas for potential difficulty is explained. |
| Case studies | Intercultural sensitivity is defined and basic components explained. |
| Intercultural sensitivity | Two fictitious studies are used to raise the issue of perception and sensitivity. |
| Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity | Milton Bennett’s well-known DMIS instrument for analyzing intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004) is introduced and explained. |
| DMIS Analysis: ‘Mr. Baseball’ (Schepisi & Claybourne, 1992) | Learners use excerpts from the movie ‘Mr. Baseball’ to apply and then critique and modify Bennett’s DMIS model. |
| Semester Two Topics | Thumbnail Description of Content |
| Dichotomies of culture | Key dichotomies (e.g. individualist-collectivist) are introduced, drawing on several examples. |
| Non-verbal Communication | This topic firstly examines various aspects of NVC (e.g. definition, function, difficulties). A second part describes the main forms of NVC. |
| Simulation Activity | An activity that resembles NVC is actually an introduction to Culture Shock. |
| Culture Shock | Various definitions are examined before aspects of the who, what, where, when, why etc. of culture shock. |
| Describe-Interpret-Evaluate Instrument | The DIE Instrument (Bennett et. al., 1977; Nam & Condon, 2010) for more objective analysis of new and/or unknown situations is explained and applied. |
| Analysis Report: Scene from ‘Tampopo’ (Itami et. al., 1985) | Learners analyse the ‘French Restaurant’ vignette from the movie ‘Tampopo’ |

7. Approaches

I have already flagged that an integrated approach to intercultural training would be taken. Also, I have described how the learners probably enter the course as newcomers to the topic of intercultural communication. It is a given that this would require a heavy focus on a ‘classroom’ or ‘academic’ approach, i.e. the imparting of basic content knowledge. That said, learning from experience is one of the cornerstones of human culture. It was probably what has put our species where it is today. No instructions came with the flint axes, stone hammers and such in the ‘Oldowan toolkit’. One of the oldest pieces of writing is exactly that (‘Instructions of Kagemni’), but until the invention of writing and spread of literacy, learning from experience was the sole methodology for learning and thus surviving. A 450 B.C. Chinese dictum translates along the lines of, “Tell me and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand”. John Dewey (1938), the so-called ‘father of experiential learning’ observes, “There is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education” (quoted in ‘Experiential Learning’). In between, a millennia-worth of apprentices would attest, and since, the nature of teaching and learning has been revolutionized.

The issues of ‘experience’ and ‘action’ are central to the course.

8. Experiential Learning

Any even brief discussion of ‘experiential learning’ cannot ignore David Kolb. Having drawn on Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, Rogers and many others, Kolb formulated his theory of how people learn, ‘experiential learning’, in the 1970s and he defines learning as:

the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience
(Kolb, 1984 p. 41)

Kolb and his ‘Experiential Learning Theory’ (ELT) remains a very influential concept and it is regarded as the modern benchmark in the field. Although represented visually as a circle (Figure 2), Kolb states it is a ‘cycle’ or ‘spiral’ of four stages and simply put:

- ‘Concrete Experience’ relates to ‘doing’ and ‘having’ an experience.
- ‘Reflective Observation’ relates to reviewing and reflecting on that experience.
- ‘Abstract Conceptualization’ relates to coming to conclusions and learning from the experience.
- ‘Active Experimentation’ relates to planning and trying out what has been learned.

The vertical axis denotes ways of ‘grasping’ the experience and the horizontal axis denotes ways of ‘transforming’ the experience. Kolb furthermore suggests certain ‘learning styles’ are better suited to different stages. These are ‘Diverging’, ‘Assimilating’, ‘Converging’ and ‘Accommodating’. The basic tenet of ELT is that if a person actively does something the chances of retaining it (call it ‘learning’ it) to the point where it sticks with them over time is not just intuitive, it is also a basic pillar of how we acquire culture.

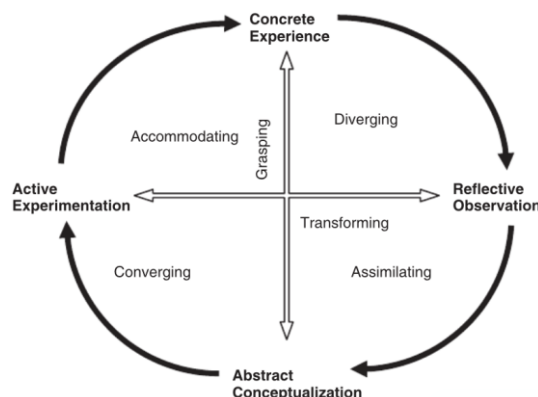


Figure 2: Experiential Learning Theory
(Kolb & Kolb 2009, p. 42)

9. ‘Experiential Education’

It is common in the vast array of serious and ‘arm-chair’ literature on ‘experiential learning’ to use the term interchangeably with ‘experiential education’. They are different things, however. The Association for Experiential Education regards the latter as “a philosophy that *informs many methodologies* in which *educators purposefully engage learners with direct experience and focused reflection* in order to *increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity* to contribute to their communities” (2017, emphasis added). The key difference between the experiential ‘learning’ and the ‘education’ is one on purposeful intent through education to guide the learning process. The two are obviously entwined.

I have described that the learners are lacking in *international* intercultural experience. Also, given the limitations of physical context, i.e. Japan, it is virtually impossible to improve on that situation. Damen (in Cosgrove, p. 3) suggests that, “Learning how to learn about a new culture is the primary skill needed for effective intercultural communication” and “an important first step in developing cross cultural awareness and inter cultural communication skills is to know yourself”. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) concur:

Cultural awareness has three qualities: Awareness of one’s own culturally induced behavior. Awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others.

Ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint. (p. 5)

The learners are somewhat experienced in their own culture, which may include *local* intercultural experiences. My particular version of ‘experiential’, then, given their limited experience as described earlier, includes encouraging learners to contribute or devise their own examples to bring theoretical constructs presented ‘to life’. I always stress that their examples are as valid and even more instructional than what may be presented by researchers, and that

they are often more valid and up-to-date.

Table 3: Experiential tasks from the author's class

| Topic | Experiential Task |
|---|--|
| Analogies of culture | Learners each create an original analogy that reflects, at least, the visible-invisible aspects of 'culture', and at best, describes characteristics that make the analogy very valid. |
| Definitions of culture | Learners provide Japanese examples to illustrate each component of the agreed-on definition of culture. |
| Models of culture | Learners provide Japanese examples to illustrate each component of the models presented. |
| Characteristics of culture | (See Table Four) |
| Culture as a system of systems | (See Table Four) |
| Stumbling blocks of ICC | Learners suggest other stumbling blocks (given the date of Barna's original publication of 1974). |
| Case studies | (With due warning given) Learners are shown sometimes sensitivity-challenging visuals under a general subject of 'Concepts of beauty' (these include tattoos, ritual scarring, cosmetic surgery etc.). |
| Intercultural sensitivity | As homework create an example of a short 'local' case study (described in Bayne, 2003) similar to those used in class. These are presented informally to a small group in the next class. |
| Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity | (See Table 4) |
| DMIS Analysis: 'Mr. Baseball' (Schepisi & Claybourne, 1992) | Learners consider the experiences and reactions of the non-Japanese protagonist vis-a-vis Japanese culture (e.g. culturally acceptable ways of apology). |
| Dichotomies of culture | (See Table 4) |
| Non-verbal Communication | (See Table 4) |
| Simulation Activity | Learners participate in a simulation that will induce mild symptoms of 'culture shock' followed by a debriefing. |
| Culture Shock | Learners draw on the Simulation Activity and other personal experiences to provide examples. |
| Describe-Interpret-Evaluate Instrument | Learners create a detailed D.I.E. analysis of a real interaction observed by the learner. |
| Analysis Report: Scene from 'Tampopo' (Itami et. al., 1985) | Learners choose any one or combination of approaches used in the course to analyse the common source carefully and in detail. |

As far as possible each topic covered by the course culminates in a ‘hands on’ activity to fill these ‘experience gaps’. Where none exists in the table, the lecture has largely focused on the necessity of delivery of new content (such as the technicalities of Non-Verbal Communication) and the learners are actively occupied to information-gathering from the PowerPoint slides (which include text and visuals) and from my embellishments and illustrative, but verbally delivered examples. Furthermore, any learner participation may be designated more as Active Learning (Table 3). Since the course is dynamic and always open to improvement, any topic currently ‘empty’ of an experiential task may not be so in the future.

10. ‘Active Learning’

Active learning exists under the very large umbrella of experiential education. Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as “anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (2). Eison elaborates on the term stating ‘active learning’ (AL) is “not merely one thing, but rather all instructional strategies” used toward that very inclusive outcome (in Isbell, 1999, p.4).

Simons (1997) defines AL in two ways, “in one sense... that the learner *uses opportunities* to decide about aspects of the learning process” and that “it refers to the extent to which the learner is *challenged to use* his or her mental abilities while learning” (*emphasis added*) (p. 20). In the first sense, the locus of control is with the students. In the second sense it may rest with the teacher (or teacher-sanctioned materials and tasks) who is asking for activity from the students. Simons (ibid.) distinguishes between them as ‘active independent learning’ and the second as ‘active working’, which could be as an individual or in a pair or group (20). He more sagely prefaces this about saying, “All learning is active in a certain sense, but some kinds of learning are more active than others” (Simons, 1997 p. 19).

Given the definitions of AL, the boundaries of what could take place in the classroom seem limitless. It would also seem to subsume almost any approach to learning such as ‘collaborative learning’, ‘cooperative learning’, ‘problem-based learning’ (Prince, 2004). Bonwell and Eison (1991) include modified, or ‘interactive’ lectures that include pauses for brief, low-risk, student-focused and structured activities, purposeful questioning, student-to-student ‘think and share’ events, and response systems. They also suggest visual-based instruction, writing in class, problem-solving, computer-based instruction, drama, role-plays, simulations and games, and peer teaching (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). As a sample, O’Neal and Pinder-Grover (2017) present a range of activities on a continuum from ‘simple’ to ‘complex’ that involve both individual and group-based activities (Figure 3).

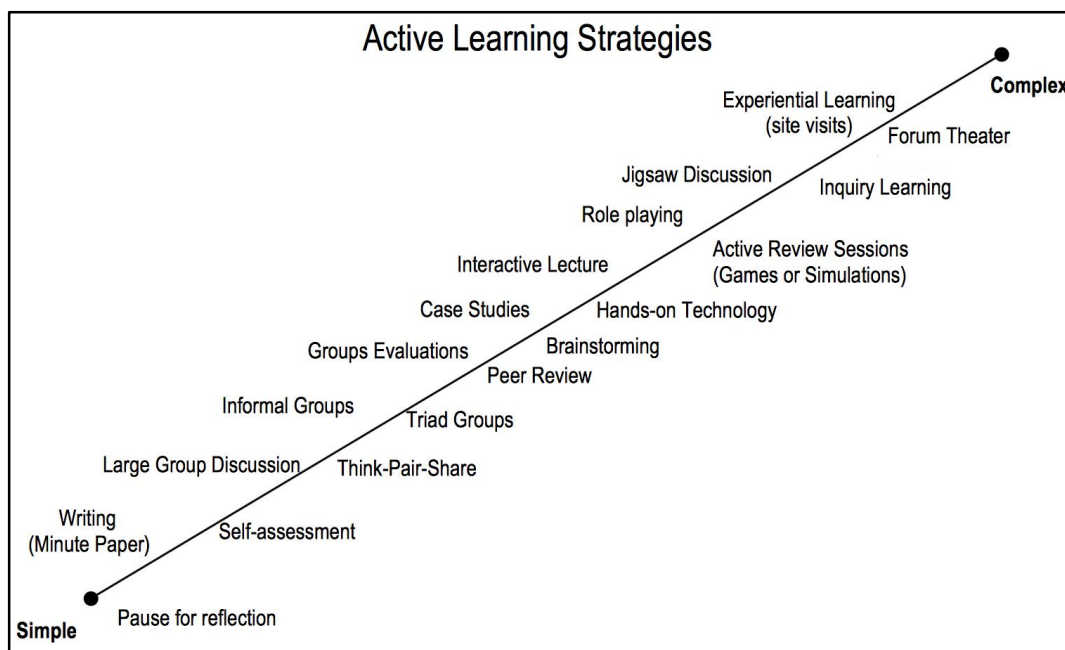


Figure 3: 'Active Learning' Strategies Continuum (O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2017)

On an individual level, listening to a lecture and taking notes would have a place on such a continuum. A key point, however, is that there is sharing in dyads or especially groups.

For the intercultural training course with the learners being described, consideration of active learning is essential. Almost all content is delivered by PowerPoint-based lectures. These are highly visual, but include note-form information. A requirement for all learners is that they take organized notes. This includes not only text, but also drawings and diagrams (Figure 1). It is often the case that homework is used and compared in groups in the next class. Key active learning activities include:

- Group work
- Critical thinking
- Sharing & active listening
- Reflection activity (5-10 minutes at the end of end lecture is set aside for learners to write comments in Japanese on "What did you think of today's topic?")

Table 4 describes the AL tasks embedded in the author's course. As was explained above, the class content was delivered mainly via lecture, but, the learner participation, either in class or as homework, was designed more as experiential (Table 4). These are being constantly revised, updated or replaced.

Table 4: Active Learning tasks embedded in the author's class

| Topic | Active Learning Tasks |
|---|---|
| Analogies of culture | Learners must apply their understanding of analogies of culture and visually represent an original analogy. In groups in the next class, analogy is shown and presented informally and explained. |
| Definitions of culture | Learners add (a) 2-3 general examples each with (b) illustrative examples (e.g. (a) clothing and (b) <i>yukata</i>) to an agreed on definition of culture. These are shared with a group and the class in the following week. |
| Models of culture | Drawing on the activity above, learners work together to add examples a designated model. New groups representing a cross-section of models are formed and learners share. |
| Characteristics of culture | Over a dozen key characteristics are presented with each having a question to consider in groups. For example, under 'Culture is a guide to behaviour' learners are asked to consider how we know what clothes to wear to different contexts. |
| Culture as a system of systems | Learners are asked to contribute examples or solve small problems that illustrate points in the lecture. |
| Stumbling blocks of ICC | (See Table 3) |
| Case studies | As homework and preparation for the next class learners must read and prepare responses to common questions on one of two case studies (Miner, 1956; Hughes, 1984). |
| Intercultural sensitivity | Learners explain their designated case study and share feelings and opinions about them. A homework activity asks them to create and explain their own case study. |
| Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity | In groups learners are asked 'construct' the target model incrementally during the class. |
| DMIS Analysis: 'Mr. Baseball' (Schepisi & Claybourne, 1992) | Based on scenes isolated from the movie, groups consider the application of the DMIS with further analysis to categorize potential examples. |
| Dichotomies of culture | For each dichotomy, groups discuss their opinions on a given 'problem' (e.g. how to distribute prize money in examining the individualist-collectivist dichotomy) |
| Non-verbal Communication | For homework students analyse of common-source photograph. This is then discussed and compared in the next class. |
| Simulation Activity | Learners participate in a simulation, 'Five Battles', that seems to reinforce the topic of Non-verbal Communication but which in fact leads into Culture Shock. Experiences are shared in groups and as a class in a de-briefing. |
| Culture Shock | (See Table 3) |
| Describe-Interpret-Evaluate Instrument | Learners apply the DIE model to photographic examples. As homework they apply it to a real-life interaction which the present in parts to a group. |
| Analysis Report: Scene from 'Tampopo' (Itami et. al., 1985) | Learners may work with others using the same analysis instrument/method. They are encouraged to use any deliver method (own visuals, digital photos etc.). |

11. 'Four' Language Skills

From the outset it needs to be stated that in consideration of the learners and the course content described above, and that the course is introductory in nature, there are no great formal demands placed on students in terms of the 'four skills' of listening, reading, writing and speaking, in the sense that they are graded on them. They are not ignored, however, as can be ascertained by the tabled information above. Here I will outline the four skill requirements that arise in the course.

11.1 Listening

The course is conducted in English and is lecture-based using PowerPoint. There is no textbook so content is collected via notes taken by the learners and any relevant handouts that facilitate classroom activities. Any audio-visual materials used (apart from the Final Assignment) are in English. In effect, learners are required to listen to English extensively in every class and to must listen intensively to take their own notes. They also listen to each other, and while English is encouraged, it is often the case that students cannot explain their experiences or suggestions fully enough in English. In such cases, and considering the intrinsic interest they have in what others have to say, Japanese is acceptable. In a sense, this is also honing active listening skills.

11.2 Writing

Learners write every class in the process of taking notes and completing handouts. Considering the range of topics this is no minimal feat. Beside this there are several required and submitted written assignments:

- Cultural Metaphor (Analogy): Learners create, draw and explain a metaphor of culture in the same way as the cultural 'iceberg' or 'tree'.
- Definition of Culture: Using the definition, "Culture is a system that is learned and shared and guides the behaviour of a group of people", the result of an in-class group 'key word' activity, learners give examples for each key word (underlined).
- Cultural Perspective (Nacirema): Learners choose something from daily life in Japan. They describe it in a completely über-objective way as was done in 'Nacirema' and 'Rac' case studies (Bayne, 2003).
- 'Sarah Palin' Photograph NVC Analysis: Learners identify and label as many examples of non-verbal communication as you can find.
- Reaction to 'Five Battles': Based on the debriefing questions, learners react to the activity.
- D.I.E: Learners observe a real-life interaction and write a detailed D.I.E. analysis.
- 'Tampopo' (Itami, 1985) Analysis – Final assignment

These assignments mirror the rationale for reading: that they are a means to an end, and the end is participation in class time. While the assignments are eventually submitted, they are firstly used in class in group discussions and sharing, both being further elements of experiential and active learning. The Final Analysis report is also written, but the focus is less on large tracts of prose, than on learners demonstrating the ability to pull together various elements of research and class activities and apply them.

11.3 Reading

Reading in English in the course is undertaken to facilitate participation rather than to accumulate knowledge. Learners are required to read a variety of text-based materials in English. PowerPoint used in lectures provide many basic key content points and key vocabulary which are embellished through explanation and example. There is a range of handouts. These can often include dense definitions of key terms (e.g. of ‘non-verbal communication’, ‘cultural sensitivity’), case studies, and activities for groups. In all cases the reading is undertaken to facilitate classroom work and therefore is kept to a minimum, the longest required reading (case study) being around 500 words. (It should be noted that many students who take this course also take my ‘seminar’ as 3rd and 4th Year students and this requires a large amount of reading covering many of the lecture topics.)

11.4 Speaking

The course does not lack for opportunities for learners to speak. In fact, speaking is a ‘must’ considering the experiential and active learning aspects of the course. Given the ‘new-ness’ of the content for learners, the expectation for them to speak fluently and coherently in English is both the most stressful and therefore least stressed of the four skills. Students are encouraged to use English in the many small group discussions, brainstorming, casual presentations and activities built into the course and some students do so. Any interactions with the teacher either in roaming the classroom or offering opinions or ideas to the class are expected to be in English, however.

11.5 Visual Representation.

A fifth element, which is a skill nonetheless is Visual Representation. The field of intercultural communication is ripe for organized models and analogies that can be rendered visually. Although kept to a minimum for this course, they are almost unavoidable especially in the initial topic.

12. Conclusion

This paper has described the rationale behind and the content of a course in intercultural training. In the process it has included explanation of the role of experiential and active learning. In addition, it outlined how the ‘four skills’ of language support the course. As can be seen in Figure 4, all these aspects of the course can interact and complement to a greater or lesser degree, with the state of A is the ideal.

Considering the context of teaching-learning, a small women-only university in Japan, an eclectic approach was taken to the course overall. Since learners were novices to the field, content covered a range of basic intercultural topic areas. The general lack of intercultural experience, both theoretical and practical, was an opportunity to include many simple, but meaningful experiential tasks. As described, active learning covers many things and possibilities, and although group work was a regular feature, it was supported by individual aspects of active learning. Finally, the content and instruction were delivered in English and thus the course provided a further context for language skill building.

The course, as is true of culture, is dynamic and continues to develop in all the areas above.

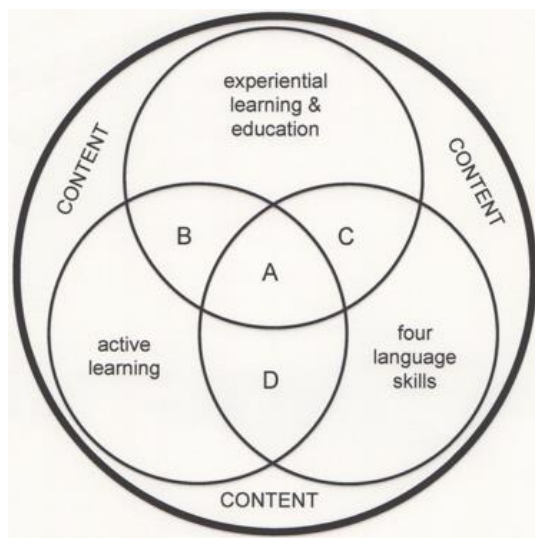


Figure 4: The ideal interaction of course elements

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